

Legislative Update

2004 Mid-Session Report to the Voters

From Rep. Shirley Hankins - 8th District

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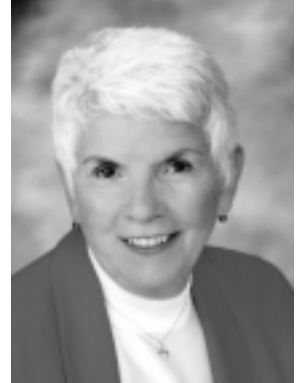
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Committees:

Transportation

Capital Budget



Dear Neighbors,

We are nearly midway through the scheduled 60-day legislative session which began Jan. 12 in Olympia.

While the local economy has kept somewhat ahead of the state, we still must keep working to protect existing jobs, especially in our rural communities, and attract new employment to our communities.

We are on the brink of new opportunities with our expanding wine tourism industry. We can use these opportunities to our advantage to create new jobs locally. That's why I'm working to secure funding for the proposed Walter Clore Wine and Culinary Center in Prosser.

As the Legislature considers a supplemental budget to carry the state through the remainder of the biennium, we must not lose sight of our paramount duty, specified in the Washington constitution, to provide for education, especially for young children.

I will be seeking additional funding for early childhood education and development in this budget. In addition, I am working to find money in the capital budget for a new health education center at Columbia Basin College.

This newsletter provides a brief look at some of those projects and goals.

As always, I invite you to contact me anytime you have questions, comments or suggestions about state government.

I appreciate the honor of working for you!

Shirley Hankins

Rep. Shirley Hankins



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Rep. Shirley Hankins • Legislative Update

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■ Budget should expand education, not prisons

This year, the Legislature will be considering a supplemental budget to cover spending changes that couldn't have been anticipated when the budget was adopted last year – things like higher K-12 school enrollments, or the cost of fighting last summer's wildfires. Unfortunately, while we should be concentrating on education funding, some lawmakers have now turned their attention toward prison expansion, specifically at Coyote Ridge Prison in Connell. I believe this is a backward approach.

A far better investment is for early childhood education and development. If we can begin to teach children at a young age, such as three- and four-year olds, and give them the foundation they need for a productive life, we won't need to be building more prisons. We should take the money proposed for prison expansion and instead, expand funding for education.

■ Bringing the health education center home for CBC

As a member of the Capital Budget Committee, one of my priorities this year is to seek funding for the support of a planned health education center at Columbia Basin College's Richland campus. Kadlec Medical Center has offered to donate \$2 million for the cost of the \$6 million, two-story building. It also is a joint effort with Washington State University and a step, some say, toward a coordinated, four-year higher education center in the Tri-Cities.

The health education center would train students for nursing, x-ray tech, diagnostics and other health-care professions, and help to relieve a shortage of local health services.



Rep. Shirley Hankins and Rep. Mary Skinner, R-Yakima, host Claire Thompson on Children's Day in the House of Representatives.

■ When opportunity knocks. . . open the Walter Clore Wine and Culinary Center

One of the greatest economic opportunities to benefit Southeast Washington is the growing wine industry. It is now a \$2.4 billion industry, with 240 wineries, 300 wine grape growers and more than 29,000 vineyard acres. Our local wines have become world famous and that has helped to expand tourism opportunities as people come from all over to see where our wine grapes are grown and to sample the products.

To foster this economic opportunity, I am proposing a \$5.5 million appropriation in the capital budget for construction of the proposed Walter Clore Wine and Culinary Center in Prosser. This center, named after the father of Washington wine, would showcase our state's wines and foods, promote agriculture and tourism, and stimulate economic development.

■ Mad cow - Ensuring a safe food supply

During the hysteria of the mad cow disease scare, a sign was spotted in front of a Yakima Valley restaurant which read, "Our beef has undergone anger management."

It is unfortunate that Washington was the first state to confirm the presence of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE). However, we have received assurances from both the state and federal departments of agriculture that none of the infected parts of the cow entered our food supply. Still, it underscores the need for the state to take steps to ensure the safety of our food. Lawmakers in Olympia are looking at several ways to restore confidence in our state's beef industry, including implementing a cattle tracking system and banning the sale or transport of downer cows. In the meantime, consumers with food safety questions can phone the toll-free USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at: 1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854).